

GMT
8. CODE OF CONDUCT

LESSON TITLE: Code of Conduct.

DATE PREPARED: November 1997. Prepared by: HM1(FMF) Torres.

TIME: One hour.

METHOD: Lecture.

LOCATION: Classroom.

INSTRUCTORS REQUIRED: One.

REFERENCES: NAVEDTRA 12966, Naval Orientation, July 1991.
OPNAVINST 1000.24B/CH.1

TRAINING AIDS: Overhead projector, screen, and lesson transparencies (slides).

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES

Because of the conduct of a few Americans during the Korean conflict, President Dwight D. Eisenhower prescribed a Code of Conduct for members of the armed forces in 1955. The purpose of the code is to provide American military personnel with a standard of conduct should they be captured by an enemy. It provides a framework of ideals and ethical standards that will help personnel resist the physical, mental, and moral onslaughts of their captor.

In 1988 President Ronald issued Executive Order 12633, amending the code to use gender-neutral language. First expressed in written form in 1955, the code is based on time-honored concept and traditions that date back to the days of the American Revolution.

ARTICLE I

I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life.
I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

No matter what your job, you are a member of the team first. Your duty is to oppose the enemies of the United States under all circumstances.

ARTICLE II

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

Even when a situation seems hopeless, you often still have a chance to win. Remember John Paul Jones! As long as you have the means to resist, you must continue to do so. If you no longer have weapons, ammunition, or other means, you have the duty to evade capture and attempt to rejoin friendly forces.

ARTICLE III

If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

Even as a prisoner, you still have a weapon for resistance. That weapon is your mind - the determination to resist and to escape. Stay mentally and physically able to seize any opportunity to escape. By maintaining the burning determination to resist and escape, you keep your mind alert. These have been the ingredients in the stories of the personnel of all branches of the armed forces who have escaped from the enemy.

Never risk placing yourself under obligation to the enemy by accepting favors; the enemy will exploit to the utmost any weakness you show.

ARTICLE IV

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful order of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

Fellow prisoners are your friends in a prison camp. Jealously guard and protect that friendship. Do nothing and say nothing that would jeopardize fellow prisoner. Article 105 (Misconduct as Prisoner) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) provides for punishment of any person who jeopardizes a fellow prisoner. This includes anyone who causes damage or harm to other prisoners, of whatever nationality, for the purpose of gaining personally favorable treatment. It also includes anyone who cruelly treats or abuses fellow prisoners while in a position of authority.

You must always resist the enemy's attempts to break down your faith in fellow prisoners. The enemy will use various tactics to attempt to shatter the unity of the prisoners. A prisoner may be singled out for special sessions with the captors. The captors may appoint one person as their representative among the prisoners. The captors may take one of the prisoners away from the group for an extended period of time and then return the prisoner with no explanation. All of these tactics are designed to destroy the prisoners' faith in one another. If the captors are successful, mistrust will grow, individuals will lose faith in each other, and the group will disintegrate into a dog-eat-dog struggle for survival.

All military prisoners in the camp are subject to the lawful orders of the senior officer present , just as they would be aboard ship. Should you happen to be senior, you will assume command. An organization must be established to carry out activities such as care of the sick and wounded, camp sanitation, and escape and resistance planning. Normally, your captors will not permit this organization to function openly, so it will have to be established secretly. Good leadership and discipline are keys to survival.

ARTICLE V

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

The Geneva Convention requires that you give your name, rank, service number, and date of birth when questioned by the enemy. Any further information, although seemingly of no importance, could be of value to the enemy in attempts to break your spirit or to be used against fellow prisoners. The Geneva Convention also forbids physical and mental torture of prisoners. However, since the Korean conflict, Communist forces have resorted to such tactics in their attempts to gain information and to get prisoners to collaborate.

The time will come when you will have to say something other than your name, rank, service number, and date of birth, if only to avoid further questioning. Do not make up stories. You may fool the interrogator for a short time; but eventually the enemy will find your stories to be false and may resort to harsher methods. A simple "I don't know" will often suffice.

Oral or written confessions to "war crimes," surrender or peace appeals, and statements critical of the United States are forbidden. They could pose a danger to you and your fellow prisoners and damage our country. Any confession becomes grounds for trying a prisoner as a war criminal if the enemy so desires.

ARTICLE VI

I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

In the event you are unable to avoid capture, remember the first sentence of the first article: "I am an American, fighting for freedom." Those seven words signify your faith and confidence in your God, your country, your service, and yourself.

As a member of the armed forces of the United States, you are always subject to the UCMJ, even as a prisoner of war. After return to friendly forces or escape, you will be investigated to determine the circumstances of your capture and your conduct as a prisoner. If you have done your utmost to uphold the principles of this code, you need not worry about such an investigation.

You may even be able to give valuable information that will help future prisoners.

Many Americans have been prisoners of war, and they all agree that the life of a POW is a hard one. A few of those POWs were either unprepared to resist or lacked the ability to maintain their basic faith and loyalty under extreme pressure. These Americans succumbed to the enemy's efforts and acted in a manner detrimental to their country, their fellow service members, and themselves. Remember, you will have to live the rest of your life remembering your conduct under stress. The majority of American prisoners have behaved honorably and with pride because they believed in and adhered to the principles and strength on which our country was founded.

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